DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 309 015 RC 017 141

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TITLE Subcultures and Educators: Concerns of Membership in Education.
PUB DATE 22 Oct 87
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Conference of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (Washington, DC, October 22, 1987).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Influences; *Group Dynamics; *Group Membership; Postsecondary Education; *Program Development; Role Playing; *Subcultures; Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

Educators are always dealing with subcultures, whether or not they are labeled as such. The distinguishing elements of a subculture are the values behind observable cultural traits. Each person belongs to one or more subcultures, and the values ascribed either by the subculture to itself or by the greater culture to that subset have continual impact upon a person's world view, which, in turn, influences the individual's responses in a learning situation. Educators often believe that they can effectively enter a subculture, albeit through acculturation. Outsiders, however, may be accepted, but rarely do they achieve full member status within the group. Subcultural values and beliefs remain abstract as non-members have not had the necessary personal experiences to understand fully the symbolism and history behind them. Understanding the inherent barriers can provide an educator with the tools necessary for sharing knowledge with any subcultural group. A client-centered approach to providing educational opportunities to adult members of a subculture allows the educator to act as facilitator to a group of subcultural representatives as they identify their own educational needs. A short role-playing exercise provides graduate students or adult education practitioners with exposure to some of the issues encountered when a member of the greater culture seeks to develop an educational program for a subcultural group. This report contains 18 references and instructions for the exercise. (SV)

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Subcultures and Educators--
Concerns of Membership in Education

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from

AAACE Conference

Thursday, October 22, 1987

Washington, D. C.

Running Head: SUBCULTURES AND EDUCATORS

RC017141

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Abstract

People bound by variant views from the "Great Society" are often labeled a subculture with culture defined by definition, world view or purpose. All people belong to many subcultures. The values and beliefs each person brings to any group is shaped by their varied memberships. The purpose of the immediate group determines the overriding values, beliefs, artifacts, issues and history that affect the person's learning in that situation/environment. Educators often try to become "one of the group" with which they are working; through an exercise, educators are exposed to the fallacies that may exist in the development of an educational program by a member of the great culture. Questions are then raised for further thought and discussion regarding membership in subcultures.

Subcultures and Educators--
Concerns of Membership in Education

From the anthropologic works of Mead, Benedict and others, an approach to understanding the inherent worth of any living culture emerged and moved beyond the separate and distinct field of folklore (Goodenough, 1971; Brunvand, 1968). Concurrent with the anthropologic emergence of "living cultures", Parsons was developing his structure of social action which is based on the development, maintenance and closeness of the group (Turner, 1974). Art education has long used cultural artifacts as representations of cultural patterns. These four fields, anthropology, folklore, sociology, and art education all consider living culture, or the customs and civilizations of a particular group of people, as important (Oxford, 1980).

The definition of culture, however, also permits the emergence of "subcultures", or people who share a "world view" that combines their symbols, values, beliefs and behaviors that reflect their immediate environment and how they react with outside change (Kearney, 1984). This view is the subculture or group's conscious representation of the outside world; to the group, the perception is reality. The process of identifying this view is sensory and subcortical or below the level of consciousness.

From prior work by Van Tilburg and Heimlich, this means of defining subculture can be extended to any group when the collective "world view" of the group is broadened to be understood as a collective group "goal" or conscious (1987). In the realm of education and especially in adult education, working with groups, i.e., working with broadly defined subcultures is an important task. The issue of coherence of the group and thus the strength of the subculture is determined by a rubric and hierarchy as explored in this paper. How the educator works with any group is determined by the educator's perception of membership in the group.

Problems in Definition/Concerns in Membership

It remains then that "people do, indeed, differ in language and custom. But the precise ways in which languages, cultures, and people relate to one another are more complicated than we commonly assume. Complications have been apparent to students of urban societies, which so often have populations of mixed ethnic and linguistic background, several social classes, many religious cults or sects, and highly specialized and differentiated occupations" (Goodenough, 1971, p. 91). Historically many anthropological studies assumed that every society or social group is culturally homogeneous and omitted the sociological view that societies are socially stratified by a myriad of cultural idioms (Leach, 1984).

These problems in the definition and ultimately the study of cultural subsets are illustrated in the words by which they are identified: subculture, lesser (great) culture, minor (major) culture, predominant culture, overriding culture, super culture and so forth. Granted, in denotation, many of these refer not to superiority but to size, (Lasswell, 1952) but the connotations of each are laden with negative images. Even in the preparation of this paper, the authors had difficulty in using words not harboring negative implications for the subset culture.

A subculture can be defined by those who want to define it and those who use the definition. A generally accepted, usable definition is nonexistent as each writer refines, revises, redefines, limits, expands, extends, contracts, or otherwise manipulates the definition to suit current purpose or needs. There are valid reasons for this lack of a substantial definition and, borrowing from Patton's discussion on the definition of an evaluation, there are six cautions:

1. No single-sentence definition will suffice to fully capture the complexities with its many nuances.
2. Different definitions serve different purposes.
3. There are fundamental disagreements about the essence and boundaries.

4. People who propound a particular definition often have some ego investment in their special perspective.
5. People on the outside looking in are often confused and uncertain.
6. There is no reason to expect an early end to either the disagreements or the confusion (1986).

The original design of the research was to provide the authors with a prescription of how to utilize the "artifacts" of a subculture in developing and implementing educational programs. As the study progressed, it became frighteningly apparent that this direction was superficial. The questions with which the study began remained, even as the study progressed. Specifically, what are those elements of a subculture that distinguish it from the great culture. Rather than folklore, art, song, dance, customs, language and those elements predicted as important, the values behind the cultural traits continued to emerge as the distinguishing elements of the culture. This is in line with Hallowell's observation that culture is a "sophisticated knowledge of <u>how</u> a human being is groomed for the kind of adult life and social participation that prepares him [sic] for one kind of culture rather than for another, and likewise for passing it on..." (1953, p. 599). This approach to exploring the phenomenon of educational programs and subcultures led

to three points that can be important concerns for an educator regarding subcultures.

First, it became important to the authors to note that all people are members of some subculture (or many subcultures), and that the values ascribed either by the subculture to itself or by the greater culture to that subset do have constant and continual impact upon how that person views the world. The individual's unique "world views," then, are actually a compilation of the world views of the subcultures to which that person belongs within the framework of the overriding major culture. Whether religion, race, marital status, geographic boundaries, sexuality, or any of the hundreds of distinguishing cultural bases, people's views are shaped by their unique experiences. This, then, becomes a valuable understanding necessary for an educator before working with a group of people who share certain values or traits often theirs only because of geographic, physiological/biological, or societal dictates or beliefs. Again, as Hallowell observed, "society, culture and personality cannot be postulated as completely independent variables...the development of a characteristically <u>human</u> psychological structure is fundamentally dependent upon socially mediated experience in interaction with other persons" (1953, p. 600).

It could be proffered, then, that the beliefs and values of a subculture are not necessarily those of any individual, but rather the consensus of the somewhat like or similar individuals who comprise the membership of the subculture. As in philosophical argumentation, agreement is achieved at the most abstract levels. In this case, the accepted subcultural values/beliefs are abstract and somewhat vague reaching specificity by each individual within the group. A simplistic, but apropos example is that of "a square is a rectangle but a rectangle is not a square." Or, the specific is a part of the general, but the general does not define the specific.

A second concern identified is that as educators, we often believe that we can effectively enter a subculture albeit through acculturation. Even given the broader view of acculturation as a two-way process affecting both groups in contact, (Beals, 1953) problems became apparent. In interviews and discussions, a different view emerged; one in which an outsider may be accepted within a subculture but not as a member of that subculture. And once a person has moved out of a subculture, rarely is that person able to reenter the subculture as a member with the acceptance they had prior. Illustrations abound supporting this assumption ranging

from Amish or Mennonites who leave the culture for the "other" world, to inner-city children who leave for education and return.

The third concern to emerge is that of belonging. All people feel at times they do belong, while at others they feel excluded from various groups. Sub-cultural sets can offer changes for positive and negative feelings of belonging. Part of the determinants on attitude can be viewed as imposed by the major culture - is one forced to be considered in terms of the major culture's interpretation of sub-cultural members (a simplistic but graphic example could be that of the "dumb blonde" or "bimbo"), or does one choose to enter the subculture as some adults "choose" their religion, not that of their parents? It might be assumed that subcultural sets for which the negative implications as assigned by the major culture are great would likely have a much stronger subcultural value system than those sets for which choice is made or positive attributes are assigned (being "filthy rich" can be a set for which the assigned attributes are predominately positive). A defense mechanism or the idea of "survival" by banding more tightly would support this assumption.

Issues of the Subculture

These general but important questions regarding definition become valuable tools when examining educational programs geared toward a

subculture. And the applications of these approaches are broad. From AIDS education for Gays to Latchkey programs for single, working mothers, many educational programs are targeted toward specific audiences - often sharing the values that in a broad sense define a subculture. Yet, the educator is faced with the dilemma of recognizing the multiple cultural influences on the individual and the shift, then, is from "the individual as representative of a cultural tradition to the group whose interaction is socially organized" (McC.Neting, 1971, p.6-3). What follows is a list of five individual issues the authors believe to be important and need to be addressed prior to the implementation of an education program for a subculture or disadvantaged population. These five issues each raise innumerable other questions which is, perhaps, the intent of such delineations. These issues are viewed from the perspective of the individual within the rubric of the subculture.

1. **Appreciate that our beliefs are different from yours.** You do not have to believe as we do, but you just appreciate the fact that our beliefs are different and, even more than that, you must learn to live with those beliefs. You may not have to accept our behavior related to those beliefs but you must appreciate our right to those beliefs. Our beliefs come from our heritage, history, conformity, and the nature

of the closeness of my culture. My cultural beliefs may be subconscious and inherent (Jung et al, 1964).

2. **Understand our values and respect them.** Our values are graphically represented in artifacts and, until you understand our values held in those artifacts, you will not gain our respect or trust. You must realize the mystic symbolism in our artifacts is our connection as a group (Spengler, 1961).

Inherent in this issue is an underlying principle of adult education so aptly summed by this statement of Malcolm Knowles (1973) and offered by Crouch (1983) as an opening to his article, "The Problem Census: Farmer-Centered Problem Identification":

> To a child, experience is something which happens to him: to an adult his experience is who he is. So in any situation in which an adult's experience is being devalued or ignored, the adult perceives this as not rejecting just his experience, but rejecting him as a person.

3. **How do we learn - what and who will we accept?** Learning is an individual activity. As each person has an individual learning style, so do certain groups have learning styles.

How we approach topics and methods, and how we understand the role of the teacher and the meaning of the student/teacher relationship all influence learning of the group.

Tradition has a great influence on learning who we, as a subculture, determine who we will accept as a group for an educator, and what characteristics the educator must have (or must not have). Understand that tradition may have evolved from tenets which no longer hold true for us, but know that we have long since stopped questioning why we believe and practice as we do. Arguing for logic and common sense (in your terms) and against tradition will only close our minds and our doors even more tightly than before. Rather, we seek coordinated interaction within our social system (Turiel, 1983).

4. **What are our beliefs about the major culture or educator?** To understand why we believe as we do, you must study the history of our interaction with members of the major culture (Turner, 1974). Has the interaction been founded in mutual respect and trust? Just knowing our side of the history is not enough. A relationship has two parties. Be sure that you know the complete story of our relationship with the

major culture. The elements of honesty and complete communication will incur respect and trust.

5. What is the past history of our involvement with the topic or related topics? Attitudes are formed three ways: through past involvement with the attitude object; from past history with a similar object; or from what others say about the object or similar object. Be sure that you know enough about us to know not only what our history has been with the topic of the educational program, but also what our history has been with similar topics, or even what we might have heard about the topic.

Given these questions, then, it is important that an educator remembers that "learning a culture and the roles on which the persisting patterns of social structure depend is not equivalent to learning a set of habits or skills, but involves a higher order of psychological integration" (Hallowell, 1953, p. 615). It is not sufficient to mimic what one sees as the "traits" of a subculture, rather, it is necessary to understand and respect the historical development of these traits and their importance to the social structure of the culture in study or question.

Developing an Exercise in Subcultural Education

In order to explore the concepts presented above and put the ideas into usable form, an exercise was developed by the authors to create arbitrarily a major culture and a subculture in which the major culture develops an educational program for the subculture and the subculture is able to react, given their beliefs and values. To do this, a simplistic culture/subculture was identified (Marrieds versus Unmarrieds) with the marrieds as the major culture. The exercise is described below.

In a group of adults, two groups are separated with no instruction other than they are to self-select according to marital status. A different set of questions is given each group, anticipating that each group would assume the other would be given the same questions/process (see appendix A). Each group works through their questions: the major culture developing a program for the minor culture, while the minor culture discusses values and beliefs that would inhibit imposed educational programs or participation in educational programs.

After thirty minutes, the two groups are brought together. The collective assembly is told at that time only, that the marrieds are the predominant culture and that they have developed an educational program for the unmarrieds. The marrieds then present their program

with rationale, as the unmarrieds react according to the beliefs, values, and concepts they developed through consensus in their discussions.

Following the general discussion of the program offered, questions on subculture membership can be pursued to focus the issues raised. Questions include: if naturally a part of a sub-culture, can an individual move out? If not naturally a part of a subculture, can an individual move in? How? How long does it take? Will that individual really be a part and know the culture as a "native?" Is there value to being a "native" rather than a self-selected member? Are there those subcultures in which membership is not by choice but by ascription of the major culture? Does this change self-selection considerations?

Pilot Test

As a pilot test of the activity, graduate students in the Agricultural Education Department at The Ohio State University were invited to participate in an hour seminar which included an explanation of the topic, and a forty minute exercise as has been described. An equal number of marrieds and singles were involved in the test. In the pilot, the major/minor cultures were reversed, and the singles planned an educational program the topic of which was

"Communications in Interpersonal Relationships," an 'obvious' need of married people as determined by the group of singles.

During the activity, the marrieds discussed their values, beliefs and past experience with learning opportunities. The discussion concluded with the singles presentation of the educational program to the singles, and an interesting event took place. The marrieds totally accepted the program which the singles had planned. This in itself was not remarkable, but the curious thing was the fact that the married had identified as a roadblock to their participation in an educational program, the notion of a "single" person planning a program for "marrieds" which is what subsequently happened.

The overall results of the activity were very much in line with what the authors had anticipated. The 'major culture' made assumptions about the beliefs, values, and practices of the 'subculture' which in some cases were right on the target. The educational program which was planned was very stereotypic of what marrieds might like. The program was planned for couples, to be held in vacation setting, with the topic of communication in relationships. The general feeling of the subculture in planning and the major culture in attending was the topic was broad and would appeal as always applicable. The marrieds were concerned about being taught by singles and, in discussion, referred to the concept

of "click off" or tune out the program if it did not immediately meet the needs and values of the marrieds. The weekend retreat with a good deal of non-meeting time was of sufficient value in and of itself to get the marrieds to attend.

The members who participated in the activity suggested the following:

- Superimposing the label of subculture on an obvious major culture (marrieds in a singles word versus the opposite) may have worked against the activity. Asking a group of marrieds to plan an educational program for singles might have enhanced the activity (this change is noted in the description above).
- The focus of the singles presentation was on the actual program planned and not on the rationale behind the decisions. A more indepth discussion of rationale may have increased debate and more discussion of issues, (as the facilitators discovered many consistent conflicts in the assumptions of the singles (the "rationale" for the program) and the beliefs/values of the marrieds.
- A complete presentation of values and beliefs held by the subculture may have provoked members of the major culture to challenge the uniqueness of those values and beliefs as belonging to only the subculture of marrieds. (Are the words

family, commitment, faithfulness, and honesty values unique to married people)?

Conclusions

Based on the outcomes of the initial trial of this activity, the authors would recommend the activity be implemented as a part of adult educator training, particularly for those just entering the field. Through this exercise participants are able to approach the concept of education from the perspective of values and beliefs of a subculture. The following table illustrates the variance between the major culture and the subculture in terms of the subset's values:

MAJOR CULTURE	SUBCULTURE
Abstract	Specific
Myths	Realities
Expectations	Behaviors
Group	Individual

From the viewpoint of the members of the subculture, values and beliefs may be on an abstract level philosophically, but the behaviors and the personal attitudes formed from membership in the subculture are ramified in very real terms. To the major culture,

perceived values and beliefs are and remain abstract as non-members of the subculture cannot fully understand the symbolism, value, and history behind the beliefs. Likewise, the artifacts, language, customs, mannerisms and other tangible signs of the subculture will never carry the weight or importance to a non-member.

For an educator, the understanding of the subculture can be a key to successful integration of the goals of the educational program. The ideas presented here are a beginning of an exploration of the intricate web of multicultural influences on individuals. The following questions indicate ideas and areas for future exploration and investigation, in addition to forming a framework for current program development and implementation.

1. In terms of subcultural membership, how is an educator viewed? Communication theory describes the "artifactual viewing" of a speaker, presenter, or educator. Expanding this theory, is an educator viewed as a nonmember of all subcultures or as a generic representative of the major culture or as a representative of a specific subculture (i.e., directly related to the subject being taught)? We offer the thought that depending upon the topic and the subculture to whom the program is given, that the perception

of the educator varies but never to the level in which the educator is a member of the subculture being addressed.

2. How can this alienation be overcome? Given the above consideration, it is suggested that "client centered" education be offered: use the subculture members and their artifacts to reach themselves. In adult education, this is often spoken of as allowing the clientele to identify problem issues.
3. Is it important that an educator be a part of the subculture? Perhaps the better phrasing would be "is it important that an educator remain a nonmember of the subculture?" Is credibility lost or strengthened through the distance offered by an "outsider?" Given the membership of all in the great culture, do the shared symbols and artifacts provide enough linkage between the educator and the clientele, or are those common bonds on too abstract a level to be a substantial basis for commonality? Extending this question further, is the subculture toward whom the program is directed cohesive as a subculture, or are their bonds of commonality abstract and vague?
4. Does it make a difference how membership in a subculture is defined? If a person is a member of a subculture by chance

or nature rather than by choice, will that person react to an outsider differently? How does the great culture's perception of the subculture determine members' own views of themselves and the great culture's intervention?

These questions are but the "tip of the iceberg". One significant issue is, the authors believe, a person cannot self-select into a subculture. Why, then, do we as educators often feel it is important to be "one of the group?" An alternative approach to providing educational opportunities within a subculture when not a member (trying to "move in") would be to employ a client-centered approach to guide the entire process. In an article by Crouch (1983) a basic outline for using this approach with farmers was presented.

A client-centered process allows the educator to work as a facilitator to a group of representatives of a subculture. This idea certainly is not new; Extension staff working with farmers in developing countries have used group approaches for many years. Their assumption is that even though both the client and educator may be members of the same great culture, the educator does not generally belong to the specific subculture of the client. The key for the educator in this process is to pay attention to the group process and not the content. There are several issues to address

when attempting a client-centered approach which have been discussed here, using the perspective of members of the subculture rather than from the educator's point of view.

Extending the point of view concept, and in conclusion, as educators we are always dealing with subcultures whether or not we have labeled them as such. A group of people who have come together to learn share, always at least, one subculture (as simplistic as graduate students in a particular discipline). The prevalent subculture in the group will be the subculture by which the individuals in the group will identify their values and beliefs -- surrendering none of their personal values and beliefs from their many subcultural and major culture memberships, but accepting the ascriptions of the major culture upon that prevalent "bond". This is the pattern or the world view (Benedict, 1935).

It is this common bond and perception that alienates the educator from membership in the subculture. It is this common bond and perception that facilitates, enables, or destroys the educational process. Understanding the inherent barriers can provide an educator with the tools necessary for sharing knowledge with a group of blondes, single mothers, divorced people, displaced homemakers, farmers, geographically remote people, racially or ethnically

distinct persons, or any number of arbitrarily assigned but valid subcultures.

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PLEASE DESIGN AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR A GROUP OF SINGLE ADULTS. USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS A GUIDE. BE SURE TO DESCRIBE RATIONALE IN TERMS OF THE CLIENT (SINGLES).

- What is the topic of the program and why did you choose it? What is a topic that will interest 'singles' and address their needs?

- Develop a brief outline of the content and why it has been included.

- Develop a plan for advertising/marketing of the program which would appeal to singles and explain why you chose these methods.

- What will be the methods of teaching and why are they being used with a group of singles?

- Describe who will be involved and why.

- What is the title for the program and why did you choose it?

- Describe the logistics (where, when, length) and rationale.

DISCUSS, AS A GROUP OF SINGLE PEOPLE, THE ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS. YOU MUST COME TO CONSENSUS AS A GROUP. YOUR REFERENCE POINT MUST FIRST BE AS SINGLES.

1. What are some beliefs which most/all single people share about themselves and their lifestyle?

2. What are some values which single people hold as extremely important? (Are there key words which single people share and would agree upon as representing the value system of singles?)

3. What are the characteristics of a learning situation which might increase participation and enhance learning for single people? (ideas might be: topic, who teaches and attends, methods, advertising).

4. What are some beliefs held by single people about married people and how they interact with singles?

5. What has been your history, as a group of single people, with education, as it directly relates to your single lifestyle?